Translation theories

Equivalence-based theories

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To drive a car, for instance, does not require you to understand how the engine of the car works, but when you have basic knowledge of such mechanism, you will definitely drive your car with self-confidence, free from worry and fear.

The same holds true for translation theories. In order to translate, you do not need to have a good knowledge of translation theories, but when you have it, you will translate with self-confidence, free from worry and fear.

When theorizing, when developing your own translation theory, first identify a problem – a situation of doubt requiring action, or a question in need of an answer. Then go in search of ideas that can help you work on that problem. There is no need to start in any one paradigm, and certainly no need to belong to one.

Pym (2010: 166)

The competent translator is not expected to restrict him/herself to one translation orientation and/or paradigm, but rather travel among them in search of informed solutions to problems.

Farghal & Almanna (forthcoming)

How to study Translation theories!

Historical background

Translation product = equivalence-based theories

Translation process = micro level Vs. macro level

A- Micro level = different approaches

B- Macro level

- **Pre-translation** **=** macro factors / global strategies
- **Translation** **=** procedures/steps + local strategies
- **Post-translation** **=** revising, proofreading, editing, translation quality control ….

What's equivalence?!

- Equivalence, by dictionary definition, is **"something that has the same value, importance, size, or meaning as something else"** (Cambridge Learner"s Dictionary 2001: 238).

- **Equal + value = equivalence**
- **Here, one would not hesitate to conclude that the two things are not identical, but rather similar. Such a conclusion is in line with Bassnett (1980/1991/2002) and House (1977/1981/1997).**

- **Bassnett (2002: 36) is of a view that equivalence "should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text, let alone between the SL and the TL versions". In a similar vein, House (1997: 26) comments that equivalence should not be envisaged as "virtually the same thing" since, linguistically speaking, it would be naïve to think of equivalence as a complete identity**.

- Reviewing a considerable number of arguments on translation equivalence, and its nature, types, possibility of achievement in the TL, among others, one would find out that scholars when introducing their views lay stress on certain aspects (cf. Abdul-Roaf 2001; Farghal 2009).
- Some scholars pay extra attention to **cultural** (Casagrande 1954; Larson 1984; House 2000), **situational or sociolinguistic** (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958/1995), **dynamic** (Nida 1964; Popovic 1970), **formal** (Catford 1965), **semiotic** equivalence (Jäger 1975), while others stress **communicative** (Lefevere 1975; Neubert and Shreve 1992; Newmark 1988), **textual** (Van Dijk 1972; Beaugrande de 1980; Beaugrande de and Dressler 1981), **functional** (Kuepper 1977; de Waard and Nida 1986; Bell 1993; Neubert 1994), **ideational** (Farghal 1994), **stylistic** (Al-Najjar 1984; Ghazala 1996; Almanna 2013d), and/or pragmatic equivalence
- (Baker 1992; Emery 2002; Bayar 2007).

Farghal's classification

- Farghal (1994, 2009, 2012) argues that all the above-mentioned views concerning equivalence can be boiled down to a trichotomy, namely **'formal equivalence'**, **'functional equivalence'** and **'ideational equivalence'** (2009: 7, 2011: 7-8, 2012: 45-48).

Ex: *He is still cracking the same old jokes despite being* ***at death's door.***

- **Formal equivalent:**

ما زال يردد نكاته القديمة نفسها على الرغم من انه **يقف في باب الموت**.

Back-translation: *He is still repeating his same old jokes although he is standing at death's door.*

- **Functional equivalent:**

- ما زال يردد نكاته القديمة نفسها على الرغم من أن **رجله تتدلى في القبر.**
- Back-translation: *He is still repeating his same old jokes although his foot is dangling into the grave*.

- **Ideational equivalent:**

- ما زال يردد نكاته القديمة نفسها على الرغم **من كبر سنه.**
- Back-translation: *He is still repeating his same old jokes despite his old age.*

Optimal (full) equivalent

- At times, the interfacing languages conceptualize the world experience linguistically in a similar way, giving rise to 'optimal equivalence' in which both formal and functional equivalents coincide (see Baker 1992: 72; Farghal 2012: 47), as in:

- e.g. Birds of a feather flock together.
- إنّ الطيور على أشكالها تقع.
- e.g. Necessity is the mother of invention.
- الحاجة أم الاختراع
- e.g. The end justifies the means.
- الغاية تبرر الوسيلة.

Equivalence & Adequacy

- Some scholars, on the other hand, relate the notion of equivalence to adequacy (cf. **Even-Zohar** 1975; **Shveitser** 1993; **Toury** 1995). For instance, Even-Zohar (1975: 43 quoted in Toury 1995: 56) argues that any translation is considered adequate when it reflects "in the target language the textual relationship of a source text with no breach of its own linguistic system". Building on such an assumption, Toury (ibid: 56) adds that what "determines a translation's adequacy as compared to the source text" is the "adherence to the source norms".
- By contrast, **Reiss** (1983: 301 cited in Al-Taher 2008: 107) clearly discriminates between the two terms. She believes that adequacy is process-oriented, i.e. a relationship between the available strategies and the translation purpose, while equivalence is product-oriented, i.e. a relation between the ST and TT.

Translation & Indeterminacy

- As long as there are more than one translation for any source text, and when we back-translate any target text, we will not have the same source text, this leads us to what's called **'indeterminacy theory'** proposed by Quine (1960) in his book 'word and object'.

- أستفيق من حلمي، أشعل المصباح المنضدي، ثم أسكب من زجاجة الماء في الكأس، أكرع الماء بسرعة لأبعد عن حلقي التخشب واليبوسة.

- **Translation 1:** I woke up from my dream, switched on the table lamp, poured a glass of water from the bottle, drank it quickly to moisten my dry throat.

- **Translation 2:** I woke up from my dream, switched on the table lamp, poured a glass of water from the bottle and sipped it quickly to moisten my rough, parched throat.

- **Translation 3:** I awaken from my dream, switch on the table lamp, pour a glass of water from the bottle and sip it quickly to relieve my throat of dryness and roughness.

- **Translation 4:** I wake up from my dream; I switch on the table lamp. Then, I pour a glass of water from the bottle; I sip it so quickly.

Jakobson's (1959) classification

Roman Jakobson (1959/1992: 145) in his essay *'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'* argues that there are three types of translation:

- **Intralingual translation** or *rewording*: It is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language", i.e. replacing certain lexical items, expressions or phrases by means of other lexical items, expressions or phrases of the same language, as in replacing the lexical item ***'purchase'*** with ***'buy'***.
- **Interlingual translation** or *translation proper*: It is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language", i.e. translating certain lexical items, expressions or phrases from one language into another. For example, when the lexical item '***purchase***' is translated into **يشتري**, it is then an example of interlingual translation.
- **Intersemiotic translation** or *transmutation*: It is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system", i.e. it is an interpretation activity from a non-linguistic communication system to a linguistic one. For instance, when you see 'the red light' while driving, and you stop, it is an intersemiotic translation.

Equivalence-based theories

Text-/author-oriented ... reader-oriented
accurate (strong) ... acceptable (week)

- **Nida's** (1964) **Formal Equivalence** Vs **Dynamic Equivalence**
- **Catford's** (1965) **Formal Correspondent** Vs **Textual Equivalent**
- **House's** (1977) **Overt Translation** Vs **Covert Translation**
- **Newmark's** (1981) **Semantic Translation** Vs **Communicative Translation**
- **Gutt's** (1991) **Direct Translation** Vs **Indirect Translation**
- **Venuti's** (1995) **Foreignization** Vs **Domestication**


The end …
Thanks a lot